

THE CALL OF “TO-DAY”**NO. 3160****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1909****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1873**

*Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith) “to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”
Hebrews 3:7*

THE Holy Spirit says, “To-day.” There is a great talk about yesterday. There are some who will have it that there are none like the days that are past, “the good old times.” There are some who glory in what they did years ago. Their work was done yesterday. They have long ago retired from the business of life, but still they are accustomed to indulge in the recollections of what they did in days gone by.

Yesterday is also dwelt upon in lamentation and even in despair. Yesterday! alas, opportunities are past. “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” Yesterday we lived in sin. Yesterday we rejected Christ. Yesterday we stifled conscience and therefore despair says that it is all over now. Time is gone. Closed forever are the gates of mercy—the death warrant is signed—the gallows are erected for the execution.

Now it is noteworthy that the Holy Ghost, neither that we may take comfort in it, nor despair about it, said not, “yesterday”—He said, “*To-day*.” He points us not to the past—(we shall have to look at that and weep over it, or bless God for it either with repentance or gratitude)—He points us not to the time of the Flood but to *today*.

A very large proportion of mankind, you will find, delight in dwelling upon the word, “tomorrow.” Oh what will they not do tomorrow! Sin shall be rejected tomorrow. The Savior shall be sought tomorrow. Clashed in the arms of faith, they will exult in the peace of Christ tomorrow. They will pray tomorrow. They will serve God tomorrow. Alas! of all the nets of Satan as a fowler for the souls of men, perhaps there is none in which he takes more than in this big net of procrastination. “I will—I will,” and there it ends. “I go, sir,” and he went not. To resolve and re-resolve, and then to die—the same is the melancholy history of thousands of hearers who bid fair for heaven a thousand times and yet will never enter there.

Tomorrow! Oh, you cursed word, tomorrow! How has man made you cursed! I find you not in the almanac of the wise—you are only in the calendar of fools. Tomorrow! There is no such thing except in dreamland, for when that comes which we *call* tomorrow it will be *today*—and still forever, *today, today, today*. There is no time but that which *is*. Time was, is not—and time to come, is not.

Today is the only time we have. Happily for us, the Holy Ghost says, “TO-DAY IF YE WILL HEAR HIS VOICE.” Never do I find Him saying, “tomorrow.” His servants have often been repulsed by men like Felix who have said, “Go thy way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.”

And never did any apostle say, “Repent tomorrow, or wait for some convenient season to believe.” The constant testimony of the Holy Ghost, with regard to the one single part of time, which I have shown indeed to be all time, is, “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Now I am trying to speak tonight not as though I were preaching at all, but I want to talk to you Christians first, and then to you unconverted people very seriously—and may God the Spirit speak through the words.

I. First to you that love the Lord, or profess to do so—Christian people—I have to say to you tonight—THE HOLY GHOST SAYS, “TO-DAY.” That is to say, that it is essential to duty that we

attend to it at once. Every command of Christ bears date today. If a thing be right, it should be done at once. If it be wrong, stop it immediately. Whatever you are bound to do, you are bound to do *now*. There may be some duties of a later date, but for the present, that which is the duty, is the duty now.

There is an immediateness about the calls of Christ. What He bids you do, you must not delay to do. The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*." And I would say this with regard to everything. Do you love the Lord? Have you ever professed His name? Then the Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*." Hesitate not to take up His cross at once and follow Him—the cross of Him who was nailed to the cross for you—who, by His precious blood, has made you not your own, but His. Confess Him before men. Has He not said, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven!" Confess with your mouth, if you have believed with your heart.

It is the immediate duty of the believer to be baptized. "As soon as thou believest in Christ thou mayest." "*To-day*," says the Holy Ghost. Having united yourself to the people of God, then whatever, according to your position and calling, is incumbent upon you, do it. Are you a young Christian—warm, fervent in spirit—and do your seniors call you impudent and damp your ardor? Listen not to them. Go and do what is in your heart. I would give nothing for a man's zeal if that zeal does not make him sometimes indiscreet.

Imprudence so far from being a sin is often an index of the possession of the highest grace. Nay, David, imprudent as you are, take the smooth stones from the brook. Wait not till you are become a king or a hoary-headed monarch about to resign the crown to Solomon. While you are ruddy and a youth, hesitate not. The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*."

Or are you called in middle life? Your sun has already spent half its day. Is it suggested to you that you should seek your children's conversion? Plead *at once* that your little ones, so long neglected, may now be saved. The Holy Spirit says to you, parent, father, mother—"To-day."

Have you come into the midst of a multitude of workers of which you are the master seeking their good? Seek it today. Have you in your heart the intention to serve God when you have amassed so much wealth? What! Shall God be second? Shall mammon take the first place and JEHOVAH be put in the background? Nay. Let your gold come in second or not at all. Let your God come in now. The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*."

"But there are urgent things pressing." If you can claim that they are duties, God forbid that I should bid you neglect them, but if they are covetous and lustful, put them aside and now, in the prime of your life, while yet the marrow is in your bones and your eye is not dim, give to God what He claims of you *today*.

Have you lingered long upon the road, and has the evening come, and has the sun almost touched the horizon, and is the red light gleaming in the sky? Then the Holy Ghost says to you, "O aged Christian, serve God today." I cannot comprehend the postponements of old age, yet do we frequently meet with them.

There was an aged man who meant to devote all his substance to the church of God, but he put it off and the thing was never done. There was another who meant to have spoken to his children. He would gather them together on a certain day and would speak to them and their children, for so had it come about that he was a grandfather, now, but he said he would do it by and by—but *the time never came*.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do"—what do the Scriptures say? "Think about it?" No, "*do it*." Give God your first and choicest thoughts. Many a man has thought over a good thing till the devil has come in with a second thought and the thing has never been done. I love that blessed thing that made Magdalene, or Mary—whichever it was—break the alabaster box over the Savior. She did not sit down to calculate, or the thing would not have been done.

And this is especially incumbent upon the aged. You are not likely to be guilty of indiscretion—your blood is not hot—therefore you may fling the reins on the back of your zeal. You are not likely to exceed in your zeal—therefore, go at once, I pray you.

Oh, I wish Christians were in the habit of following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Remember, there are many things He gives to us that we do not deserve at all or do not receive so as to carry them out. Be you not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. Oh, be guided by gentler means, the softer touches of God's hand.

The Holy Ghost says, "To-day." Whatever Christian service may come across you, Christian brother, *let me urge you not to let the night pass away, nor tomorrow, until you have accomplished the whole of it.* Get through it, dear brother, get through it, at once. The Lord knows when duty will be most acceptable to Him. The Lord loves fresh gathered fruit. You are not to store it up until the bloom is gone and say, "I will bring it tomorrow." The Holy Ghost says, "To-day." **WHATEVER IS TO BE DONE FOR THE LORD, LET IT BE DONE NOW.**

And then there is a second set of obligations which come upon the Christian, viz., undoing. Now **THE HOLY GHOST SAYS "TO-DAY."** Have I done wrong towards my neighbor? Have I spoken an unkind word? Have I made an unjust speech? Let me make my peace with my friend. But when? "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

I heard the other day that when a wasp had stung one, the sting would go away if the wasp died ere the sun went down. And peradventure there may be about each one of us some bad habit, something we cannot justify ourselves in. Let us seek to be purged from it, for "the Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day.'" Is there any sin to be conquered? There is no such time to smite sin as today.

You will never kill this Amalekite as well as now. He will be off his guard if you smite him now. **AT ONCE, THEN, STRIKE THE BLOW AGAINST THE SIN, WHATEVER IT MAY BE.** There is no time for killing weeds in the garden of the soul like today. There is no time for throwing salt upon the field which is fruitful with noxious poison like now.

Never imagine that you will get rid of sin by degrees. I know some people have been cured of a taste for strong drink by degrees, and such things may be possible, but the Christian will find it easier to wean himself at once by a sacred total abstinence from everything that is sinful—for as long as you parley with the enemy, the enemy will still have power over you—and blessed is that man who does not begin to take off one finger of his right hand and then another and then another, but takes the axe and chops it off as one whole thing at once. "If your right hand offends thee cut it off." Some think this enough, "If thy right hand offend thee pare the nails." It is not so. Oh, yes—for doing and for undoing—the Holy Ghost says, "To-day."

But I cannot linger where there is so much to say. Remember, beloved Christian friends, that there are some duties which if you **DON'T DO TODAY YOU NEVER WILL DO.** I called upon a Christian some time ago and saw him looking very sorrowful. He was a man of earnest spirit, always trying to do good, and I was surprised to see sorrow on his face. But he said, "My dear sir, I met with a very sad thing this morning. There is a man who has been doing certain errands about here, and I noticed him and felt a great concern about his soul, and yesterday I had resolved that when he came into the shop I would speak to him. It has been my habit to speak to all I come in contact with. Well, I don't know whether I can excuse myself or not, but this man came upon his usual errands, and I was busy and did not speak to him as I designed. I intended to do it this morning, but his wife has come round and said he is dead, and I cannot forgive myself, for there is nothing else I can do for him, and I feel almost as though his blood will lie at my door."

You cannot tell but what you will be in company this evening with somebody who will never have a warning if you do not give it *tonight*, never have another invitation to come to Jesus—and if you should hear tomorrow that your friend has suddenly dropped down dead and that he was unconverted—it would cause you some regret and remorse that you had not spoken.

Now, now, because it is "now or never." If it might be, "Now or tomorrow," there might be some reason for delay, but it is not so. It is "now or never." Therefore I do pray you, brethren (and I am speaking much more to myself than to you), to be instant in season and out of season. Oh, pity those

poor souls who live in darkness and do not know our sweet Lord Jesus. "Ye are the light of the world." Defer not the light-giving, lest the night come to them wherein you cannot help them.

Notice again—WHEN WE INTEND TO DO CHRISTIAN SERVICE TOMORROW, AND DO IT FAITHFULLY AND WELL, YET WE SIN. There is a contract for certain steamers to carry her Majesty's mails and they are bound to leave Liverpool at such a time and arrive at New York so long afterwards. Suppose they leave six hours after the time? If they make the best voyage they can, they break the contract. And an action which is done tomorrow, but should have been done today, whatever be its acceptableness in itself, is faulty. It is as an untimely fruit, out of date.

If I do not do till tomorrow what I ought to do today, I cannot do tomorrow's duties. I cannot possibly put Thursday's work into Friday. Cannot I call in help? Yes, but I am robbing my Master of my friend's service. I have work to do which never can be done in eternity unless it is done today. Throughout the whole of eternity I can never make up for that lost hour. The work of that hour is gone and can never be done. Eternal mercy can wipe out the sin and blessed be God, it will—but there is the fact for all that. Therefore the Holy Ghost says, "To-day." Today's work is to be done today—therefore, let it is done.

For, beloved friends, there is one remark with regard to service for God, and that is, that DUTIES PUT OFF TEND TO THE HARDENING OF THE HEART. You begin to be familiar with the neglect of them and nothing is more injurious to the mind than familiarity with sin. To be acquainted with sin is to be made sinful. When I postpone a duty, I am acquainted with the neglect of that duty.

How many times—(I will put a riddle to you if I can. Probably you will recollect it)—how many times does a man sin in an hour who does not perform the duties of that hour? There is one act of omission, which he has committed the first minute. He ought to have done it at once. Is there a sin each minute or is there a sin each tick of the clock? I would like you to think of that.

It seems to me that we do not know how many sins there may be crowded into the neglect of a duty for an hour. And some have neglected duties for a week. They have disobeyed God for a week. Have you ever seen your child sin in that way? You have said, "John, go to the door!" Has he been an obstinate child and not gone but stood still? You say again, "John, go to the door!" Still he does not go. I wonder how long you would let your child stand still? I think I know some who could not manage for five minutes to keep their hands off him—and perhaps it is well they should not stand it long.

But now God has had His hands off you, some professors, by the week together, and the year together, for what you know you ought to have done—and yet you have not done it. And all the while the Word of God says to you, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." But you have still continued to tempt the Lord and tried Him, though by the wonders of His mercy He has kept His hands off.

Don't provoke Him anymore, but go and say, "I have delayed too long. Now, Father, I will do what You bidd'st me. Help me by Your grace, for I will not be a disobedient child anymore." Delay not, for you have provoked Him too long already. I have often pitied God, to think He should be so badly treated, that His children, whom He treats so well, should make Him such poor return. Let us have sympathy with our dear heavenly Father and say, "We will grieve Him no more."

There is one more thing that I want to say to you, dear Christian. I have been putting it very strongly today, but I have felt authorized to do so because the text puts it so. THE HOLY GHOST SAYS, "TO-DAY." *The Holy Ghost!* That clothes it with deep solemnity. The Holy Ghost! That is, the divine person of the Godhead, concerning whom we find that there is a sin against Him which will never be forgiven.

If we want to keep clear of that sin, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Be very tender concerning all sin—be tender most of all concerning this. Remember how the Holy Ghost loves you—how He *loves* you! Jesus Christ loved men so that He came and lived *amongst* them, but the Holy Ghost loves men so that He comes and lives in them. I wonder which is the more admirable in condescension—the incarnation of the Son or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? They are both divinely merciful and gracious.

Grieve Him not, then—He is your Comforter—He is your Comforter! And have you vexed Him who dwells in you and shall be with you? The human heart ne'er entertained so divine a guest. Resist Him not. Yield to Him *now*, for that is the very point on which He lays stress. The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*."

Now I have said in myself (and I pray God to help me carry it out) I will strive after more grace and I will seek to do what good I can now. Dear brethren, let that not be a resolution merely, but let us practice it, for the Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*."

II. Now I am going to turn away from you Christians to talk to the unconverted a little, and I pray that what is said may go to their hearts. TO YOU, UNCONVERTED SINNERS, THE HOLY GHOST SAYS, "TO-DAY." I asked a brother why he was not present on a certain occasion and he said, "I never got an invitation." I am afraid there are some sinners that never come to Christ because they do not get an invitation. I know that is not the case with any sinner who is in the habit of coming to this house. I believe Christian ministers would do well, or at any rate not ill, if they never preached anything but invitation. There is much more to preach to advanced people of God, but still there are men who all their lives long have invited men to come to Christ, and I believe they do not ill to spend their whole time in that.

Now the point in the invitation is—When is it? Somebody says, "Will you come to my house to dinner?" Well, if that is all he says, I do not come. But if he says, "I dine at half-past five," then he gives me the time of day and tells me when he wants to see me. You know if a person says, "Whenever you are going by this way I shall be glad to see you," you never call in at all. But if a man says, "I shall be glad to see you at such and such a time," you understand his invitation.

And now the Holy Ghost puts a time to the invitation. I am not invited tomorrow, but this first of May—this sweet May day, the Holy Ghost says to me, "Come to Christ, today." And He says to you tonight through these lips of mine, "Today, even now, come seek and find every good in Jesus joined." "Look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." The time is fixed, and the time is fixed for today.

Why did He fix *today*? Well, first, it was His mercy fixed it. Suppose He had said, "tomorrow"? It would have been unkind to detain you in the gall of bitterness all the night. You would have had a wretched night and have said, "I shall not live through it." You would have wanted Christian people to come and sit with you and pray with you, while you were under condemnation, that you might reach tomorrow morning.

But He has not said to you that you have got to wait until you are seventeen, or to you yonder, that you have got to wait until you are thirty. Oh, no, He says, "*Today*." And then it is in wisdom that He says "today," because it is wisdom to seek the Lord at once—for otherwise the thread of life may be snapped. Have you ever noticed how much more frail our life is than glass? I have seen thin Venice glass three or four hundred years old, but I never saw a man last that time. We are frail things. A moment's touch and we are dust. The Holy Ghost therefore does not put it off unwisely, but He says, "*To-day*."

And the Holy Ghost does it, too, in addition to His mercy and wisdom, out of love to holiness. He would be a partaker of our sin if He excused our living an hour in sin. He never does. If I had God's liberty to remain in sin a week, He would be a partaker in my sin. But He has bid us fly to the fountain *now*. Lovingly and yet with a sort of sternness does He bid me come today. "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice," forsake your sin and fly for refuge.

I might mention other attributes of God which would move Him to put it "*To-day*," but I will not. If you are at all affected by what I have said (and I hope you may be) don't say, "Well, I will resolve to *think* about my soul." I have noticed so many people who have felt, "I'm a good fellow after all—I have made a splendid resolution, haven't I?" Just as I have seen men in commercial life head over heels in debt, go to a loan society or raise a little money at their bankers, or perhaps do what is much the same thing, without raising money at all—give a promissory note and say, "Well, I've paid that man!" when

they have never paid him a farthing, but have given him merely a bit of paper. They get on wonderfully easy because they have passed a bit of paper saying that they will pay at a certain time when they know that they never mean to do it.

Resolutions are promissory notes that men give to God and nothing ever comes of them. I sometimes wish there was no "paper" in business—and certainly I wish there were no "resolutions" in religion. A resolution to repent may damn a man, but a belief would save him. A resolution to believe in Christ may only check the voice of conscience, but a belief would save. Your resolutions are of no use whatever—like draughts from Aldgate Pump—they are not worth thinking of. Oh, to have real practical obedience to Christ, for the Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*."

Let me just speak further to you for a moment or two. It does seem very sweet that the Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*." Do you know what I would do if I were in your case and you in mine? I recollect when I sought the Lord I hoped that after some months of darkness I might get light, and it was according to my hope. Now if I had to seek Him over again, I would go and say, "Lord, You have said, 'To-day.' Lo! I seek You today and shall I say 'Today,' and You say 'Tomorrow?' Dear Savior, I trust You today. Today speak peace to my conscience. Today apply the blood of sprinkling and give my spirit rest."

I would make a plea of it if I were you—for if a man made a great feast and said to the poor, "Come today," the poor would not expect to sit shivering there to get a meal tomorrow. But they would say, "Our invitation was *today*. There is provender today." So, sinner, if you will come to the Lord and say, "My Lord, my Father, You have called me today—therefore today I feel Your love to me, and I pray You today to put my sins away as far as the east is from the west"—God will keep His word and you will find speedy rest.

Oh, some of you HAVE LIVED LONG ENOUGH WITHOUT GOD. Some of you have lived fifty years without God and long enough to be condemned. Oh, you would not like to be converted and then be of no service to your Lord at all, or only have given Him a few months of your life. I pray you, think of this—the long time past—which may have sufficed you to have wrought the will of the flesh and the short time that is to come. Do you know how soon you are to die?

Is there any man here who is certain that he will live to see another year? When the next service is held to watch the old year out and the new year in, will you be here, or where will you be? The Holy Ghost says, "*To-day*." Every hour that passes is hardening you if you are remaining out of Christ. It becomes less probable that God will meet with you. There are so many more opportunities wasted, so many more appeals thrown away.

O, dear hearers, if God made you stand on this platform and said, "I will tell you who they are that will reject your message and perish finally," I would say, "Good Spirit, tell me no such thing! Conceal the secret! I do not wish to know it." I think it would break my heart to look in some of your faces and think, "That man will be in hell and be in anguish, and ask for a drop of water to cool his tongue." I could not bear to feel that it would be so. And yet I feel morally certain it will be so with some of you. Oh, I am staggered when I feel how souls come into this Tabernacle (and some of you are always here) and do not get the blessing. I pray tonight that some of us may get the blessing.

An incident occurred this afternoon. An aged minister, an excellent man, came into my vestry and shook my hand and said, "I have got this letter which I would like you to see." Well, I had many things to attend to, but he was so anxious and said, "I know you will like to see it," that I took the letter. Before I read it he explained to me that he had a son who had made a profession of religion, but had gone aside from it, and it had pretty well broken his heart. At last, he was to go to America, and the father sent him away with a very heavy heart.

The old man took off his spectacles. The letter was from his son and it said, "I went to hear Mr. Spurgeon, and I have not the slightest doubt that it has had an influence on my whole life. The text was, 'He is as a root out of a dry ground.' The sermon was divided into four parts." I can recollect the sermon well enough. I was suffering from great pain at the time.

"The point which lasted longest was that in which he said that God had made Christ to grow up like a root—like a root out of a dry ground. He went on for twenty-five minutes"—(then he gave an opinion of my style which I won't read to you)—"but what surprised me most was that, out of five or six thousand, he fastened his eyes on me though I was in the farthest gallery"—(the young man's name was Thomas So-and-so—the son of the Baptist minister—"and suddenly he shouted out these words, 'There's that wild, daredevil Tom. God means to save him and he will be a comfort to his father in his old age.'")"

The old gentleman took off his spectacles again when I got to that and said, "And so he is." It went on, "I thought he was going to say my name." He trembled lest the people should think his name was Tom.

Well, that cheered my heart to think of that young fellow, and I thought I would have a shot at some of you tonight—and I pray that it may go right straight through your hearts.

And now, this first of May, if you meet with God tonight, if you pray and believe in Jesus tonight, this will be your spiritual birthday. You will recollect the night that believers were baptized and that that night Christ met with you.

It is now three-and-twenty years, I think, within an hour or two, since I was also baptized on the first of May, confessing Christ in my early youth, and I will close my sermon by saying that if He had been a bad master I would have run away from Him, and if He had not kept His promises, I would not believe Him. But He has been a good Master and a dear Savior. I think it is twenty-four years during which I can bear an earnest testimony to the goodness and love of Christ.

If you knew Him you would not live a minute without Him. "Ah," say you, "will He have me?" Will you have Him? That is the point. You won't have any wooing to do towards Christ. He loved sinners. He died for sinners. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

THE HOLY GHOST SAYS "TO-DAY." Do you say "*To-day*" too? Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 3 AND 4:1

Hebrews 3:1. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partaker of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;*

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." What wonderful titles! "Holy brethren," made brethren in holiness and made holy in our brotherhood—"partakers of the heavenly calling"—called of God from among the worlds. Our occupation and our calling henceforth is to serve the Lord.

Well, if you be holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Think much of Him. Remember who it is you follow, with whom you are brethren. If you think little of your Leader, you will live but poor lives. Consider Him, often think of Him, try to copy Him. With such a Leader, what manner of people ought we to be?

2-3. *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*

Moses was but a part of the house, after all—a prominent stone in the building, but Christ is the builder—builder of the house, foundation, topstone of it. Then think much of Him. Get a high idea of Him as faithful unto God in everything. Moses kept the law and was a good example to Israel save in some point of weakness, but Christ perfectly carried out His Father's commission, and He is worthy of more honor than Moses.

4-6. *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;*

but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

"But Christ as a son"—far higher degree—"Christ as a son over his own house," of which He is the heir, of which He is even now the sole proprietor, "whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." None are truly Christ's but those who persevere in grace. Men may be nominally Christ's, but they are not Christ's house unless they hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Temporary Christians are not really Christians.

7-8. *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

You are His house, give Him rest, do not provoke Him. If you belong to Him, be holy, do not grieve Him. If you are His house, be not defiled—surely He should dwell in a holy place.

9. *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.*

Oh, children of God, you have, some of you, been more than forty years now in the Lord's service. Do not vex Him. You have been long called out of Egypt and brought into the separate place in this wilderness world—be careful to be fit for the divine indwelling.

10-11. *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)*

God grant that none of this congregation may be of that mind who, having named the name of Christ and being known as His people, continue to grieve Him one way and another, to put Him to the test by their doubts—to make Him angry by their sins. No, God grant we may be of another sort lest He should lift His hand and swear, "They shall not enter into my rest."

12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

Here the charge is not to the outside world but to those whom he had called, "holy brethren." He drops the word "holy" for there are some brethren so-called who would not deserve that name, and to them he speaks very pointedly, "Take heed, take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

And how will that be shown? By wandering off, one way or another, away from the living God. If your God is not a living God to you in whom you live and move and have your being, if He does not come into your daily life, but if your religion is a dead and formal thing, then you will soon depart.

13-14. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;*

Not otherwise. Again I say they who do not hold on and hold out are not really partakers of Christ, but we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Those that fly to this doctrine and that, unsettled spirits, wandering stars, mere meteors of the night—these are not Christ's, but we must hold the beginning of our faith steadfast unto the end.

15. *While it is said, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

Twice over we are warned of this, to avoid hardness of heart. God save us from ossification of heart, petrification of heart, till we get a heart of love or a heart of stone—may God save us from this.

16. *For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.*

There were two—it was a slender remnant that were faithful.

17. *But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

God speaks very lovingly of the bodies of His saints, but see how He speaks of the bodies of apostates, "whose carcasses," as if they were no better than so many brute beasts, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness."

18. *And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*

Sinning and not believing seem to go together. The seventeenth verse asks the same question as the eighteenth, but the answer is different. "With them that had sinned" says the seventeenth verse, "to them that believed not," says the eighteenth verse. Want of faith brings want of holiness, and when we abide in the faith we abide in obedience.

19. *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

Hebrews 4:1. *Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

I left out the "us" because that is inserted by the translators and should not be there. The promise is left to somebody, it does not say to us, "a promise being left of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Not come short of it but even seem to do so. God keep us from the very shadow of sin, from the very appearance of evil.

"For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." In the old time that Gospel which was preached to them was preached to us, "but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." God send us this holy mixture of the hearing and the believing, to our soul's salvation, to His glory. Amen.

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